

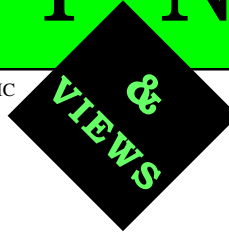


COMMUNITY NEWS

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THEME: Regionalism

Think Regionally, Act Locally

John H. Logie

In 2000, we elected 537 people to run the whole United States: 435 Congressmen, 100 Senators (actually about a third of them), the President, and Vice President. In our regular elections in Kent County, we elect 637 people to run local government in the county. Exactly 100 more that it takes to run the whole United States. They make up 47 local units of government – the county, 12 cities, 29 townships, and five villages. In the aggregate, they spend over \$650 million every year.



John H. Logie, Mayor of Grand Rapids

In the last 20 years or so, there have been some dynamic examples of local governmental consolidations. Indianapolis, IN, and Charlotte, NC come to mind as does Jacksonville, FL, particularly for its similarities to metropolitan Grand Rapids. In 1990, Grand Rapids was a city of 175,000 people with a metropolitan area of approximately 600,000. So was Jacksonville. Today we are a city of just under 200,000 in a metropolitan area of 700,000. Jacksonville is a city of 750,000 people. Typically, these consolidations are successfully promoted by the city, county, and surrounding governments, with legislative help at the state capitol. But it is not about to happen around here.

Townships have been part of the fabric of local government since the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. They are popular with their residents, have a successful lobbying organization in the Michigan Townships Association, and are here to stay.

I respect that. Therefore, it seems unlikely that what occurred in those other states will happen here. Not even the possibility of a National Football League franchise (which went to each of those three cities after consolidation) is likely to motivate us to that degree of change.

Having accepted the foregoing wisdom for the foreseeable future, Grand Rapids has embarked on some significant efforts to get people to think about regional solutions to

problems, while retaining the right and power to make local decisions. Done carefully, it is possible to achieve break-through results without requiring changes in the state law.

Interurban Transit Partnership

Until three years ago, the second-largest bus system in Michigan was named GRATA (Grand Rapids Area Transit Authority). Its 18-person board consisted of nine members appointed by the City of Grand Rapids and nine from the other participating communities. Only one community, the City of Wyoming, had a voted property tax millage (0.25 mills), with the rest of the communities using general fund dollars. And Wyoming often struggled to pass its millage renewal. Bus service was largely limited to Monday-Friday, daytime only. In April 2000, after a series of meetings among the Mayors of the six core cities that were at the heart of the system, a single millage request for 0.75 mills was presented to the voters of all six cities on the same day.

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By agreement, if an area-wide majority said “yes,” all six cities were committed to participating in the millage and in the new Interurban Transit Partnership. In fact, it passed overwhelmingly in four of the communities, including the two largest, and lost narrowly in two of the smaller communities which, nonetheless, are now part of the new system.

Grand Rapids willingly reduced its level of “control” by agreeing to a new 15-member board, only five of which are appointed by Grand Rapids. Our thinking, which has been vindicated, is that men and women of good will appointed to plan and run a truly regional organization will more often than not approve a regional solution — not just their own parochial issues. It’s working out that way. Service has been expanded into the nighttime and weekends, and new services added with more to come.

New Water/Sewer Agreements

Like many large cities in Michigan, a snapshot a few years ago would have shown Grand Rapids as the owner and operator of a water pipeline system to Lake Michigan, and a large sewage treatment plant, which not only served the core city, but also more than a dozen suburbs. Typical agreements ran 30 to 40 years, and the rate methodology, after its initial negotiation, included a process for evaluation and update. These agreements did nothing to retard sprawl. They did nothing to ensure that best practices would be followed. They did nothing to deter leap-frog developments triggered by a developer getting control of a large piece of property miles away from existing infrastructure, and then finding a way to talk the City into running water and sewer lines out to his project, or worse, simply settling for County approval of wells and septic tanks.

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American Planning
Association
www.planning.org

Journal of Housing and
Community Development
[www.nahro.org/publications/
johcd.html](http://www.nahro.org/publications/johcd.html)

Michigan Association of
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www.miregions.org

Michigan Land Use Institute
www.mlui.org

Michigan Society of Planning
www.planningmi.org

National Association of
Regional Councils
www.narc.org

National Neighborhood
Coalition
www.neighborhoodcoalition.org

People and Land
www.peopleandland.org

The Local Government
Commission
www.lgc.org

United Growth for Kent
County
www.msue.msu.edu/unitedgrowth

"In order to form a more perfect union..."

Rex L. LaMore

It is a characteristic of democracies that each generation of citizens must reinvent their democratic society in their own time and in their own way. Balancing the protection of individual rights, our heritage of self-determination and providing efficient governance for our common good challenges each generation. While we may think of our freedoms as a birthright, actually our free society is something each of us "earns" through our daily activities. It is also something we might easily lose through our neglect or inaction.

We find ourselves confronting a complex set of challenges regarding our long established beliefs in local governance and our growing recognition that sustainable communities are, in part, regional in their nature. Despite the common perception of Michigan as a "home rule" state with strong opposition to any reduction in local autonomy, the Michigan State University Center for Urban Affairs found in a recent study that a surprising majority of Michigan residents support the consolidation of local governments to reduce costs and improve the efficiency of public services.

In a telephone survey conducted by MSU's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, 1001 residents were contacted across the state of Michigan during October and November of 2001. The findings of this statewide study indicate that 71% of Michigan residents agree that local governments (cities, villages and townships) should be consolidated in an effort to save money and improve public service delivery (see Figure 1). When asked if the state government should offer financial incentives to local governments to cooperate, 85% of those surveyed agreed (see Figure 2).

This broad support for local consolidation and cooperation is evident among residents from varying types of communities and political affiliations. Even the least supportive group, residents from rural communities, reported high levels of support (63% for consolidation and 77% for cooperation). Residents from suburban communities were most likely to support these issues. Democrats favored these approaches slightly more frequently than Republicans or Independents, though respondents from each political party show solid support for consolidation and cooperation.

The findings of this survey run smack in the face of the 'common wisdom' articulated by many government officials who maintain that citizens want their home rule local governments. It would appear from the results of this public opinion survey that many citizens in Michigan are re-thinking the nature of our democracy and our structures of governance.

Should state governments be consolidated if it saves money and improves efficiency in delivery of services?

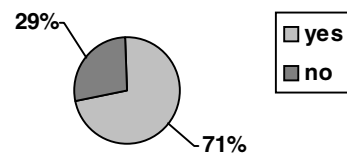


Figure 1

Should state government provide financial incentives to local units of government for working together to reduce costs and improve delivery of services?

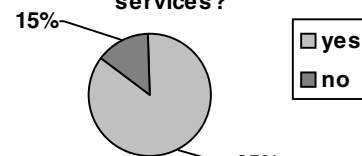


Figure 2

Thomas Jefferson argued at the founding of our nation that an informed and enlightened public are the surest protectors of a democracy. It is rather ironic to note that Jefferson was in his time a leading proponent for many of the local governance structures we have today. This edition of *Community News and Views* gives special attention to the issues of local governance and the concepts and practices of regionalism in our state and nation. Many citizens throughout our state are engaged in far-ranging discussions on this critical issue. Their collective engagement, combined with an informed public consensus are, as Jefferson asserted, the surest protector of our democracy. We hope you will find the articles contained in this newsletter helpful to you as you consider your responsibility to act on this important issue.

Rex LaMore, Ph.D., is State Director of the Michigan State University Center for Urban Affairs, Community and Economic Development Program.

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After two years of bargaining and negotiating, a new voluntary association — a true partnership — has been established between the City and its customers. With one exception (a small township whose 30-year agreements were expiring), 100% of the City's water customers and almost 90% of its sewer customers have voluntarily terminated existing agreements, some of which had many years still to run, in favor of new agreements which, among other things, establish an urban utility boundary in each of the participating communities. Development will be encouraged only within these boundaries. Each community sets its own boundary. Once a desirable density has been reached, the boundary itself can be moved further outward away from the core. It is truly the first anti-sprawl measure of its kind in Michigan, and it is starting to work.

In addition, a second agreement requires each participating community to deposit into an urban cooperation fund \$1.00 for every resident that is using the system. Last year, almost \$300,000 was allocated to projects all over the region, including some in areas not even a part of the water/sewer district itself, to aid in land-use development, planning, and other positive features decided on by the individual communities and by a board that sits apart from the advisory board on water/sewer. Once again, the City of Grand Rapids was willing to loosen and share the reins of control with its neighbors, who are now partners. It is a shining example of regional thinking.

The Metropolitan Rebate

To take the next logical step, it will be necessary to seek a new state statute. Remember the \$650 million that the 47 local units of government in and around Grand Rapids spend every year? Reducing costs for each government by just 5% would free up over \$30 million, year after year, of taxes that are already being collected. Our proposal, which we are attempting to have put into draft legislation at this time, would permit voluntary service consolidation agreements among local units of government with a tax rebate to those units as the incentive.

While I will use the metropolitan area around Grand Rapids as an example, the concept can and should be applied to many other metropolitan regions.

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The state income tax for the Grand Rapids area produces something more than \$10 million for every 0.1 of 1%. The Metropolitan Rebate would allow the citizens' equal to at least 75% of the population of any metropolitan area in the state to voluntarily agree to consolidate governmental services in exchange for which the state would rebate between 0.15% and 0.20% of the participating governments' total state income tax back to each unit. The more units there are participating, the higher the percentage. So, maybe just saving \$30 million locally out of what we are already paying isn't incentive enough, but if the state would throw in another \$20 million of new money, then perhaps \$50 million would get us started.

[The Metropolitan Rebate] proposal would permit voluntary service consolidation agreements among local units of government with a tax rebate to those units as the incentive.

We are talking about real dollars each year for new and expanded programs, without any increase in local taxes. If our urban core areas could voluntarily create this kind of new revenue base, the pressure on state government to subsidize local government will be greatly reduced. And, finally, such consolidations as we can agree upon would expand our ability not only to think regionally, but also to act regionally, while retaining local control.

Over 100 years ago, British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli said: "People prefer a familiar problem to an unfamiliar solution." That, and our own legislative process, are the only things standing between us and a bright new day of regional cooperation.

John Logie was first elected Mayor of the City of Grand Rapids in 1991 and re-elected in 1995 and 1999. Mayor Logie established and is co-chairman of the Urban Core Mayors group of 12 of the older, urban cities in southern Michigan. Mr. Logie is Of Counsel with the firm of Warner Norcross & Judd, where he has practiced law for over 30 years. He has a B.A. degree from the University of Michigan, an M.S. degree from George Washington University, and a J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School.

Balancing Act

Leah Kalinosky

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In the past, discussion of smart growth and affordable housing were often posed in terms of balanced growth *versus* affordable housing. In recent years, there have been many state and local growth-related ballot measures, but few have addressed affordable housing. The truth, however, is that smart growth and affordable housing are not incompatible goals. Studies have shown a number of policies can promote smart growth principles while expanding the quality, supply and distribution of affordable housing.

For example, measures to protect the environment and stop the outward march of sprawl by promoting smaller lot sizes for single-family homes as well as allowing duplexes and apartments can also lower housing costs, according to the National Neighborhood Coalition (NNC) study.

Furthermore, another NNC report, *Smart Growth for Neighborhoods: Affordable Housing and Regional Vision*, examines what authors have said about the connections between growth management and affordable housing and finds that there is not sufficient evidence to suggest the balanced growth is bad for affordable housing.

Affordable housing providers and community development organizations are increasingly making their voices heard in these debates. Growth-management measures in Arizona and Colorado were defeated in November 2000. The initiatives, which were intended to curb sprawl, faced resistance from some state and local affordable housing organizations that were concerned that the measures would drive up the cost of the land, impeding their ability to provide much-needed affordable housing. These initiatives, however, have opened the doors to more dialogue between affordable housing and community development professionals and smart growth advocates.

Balanced growth and sprawl

Smart growth is a response to concerns about how American communities have been growing over the last several decades. Specifically, it is a response to sprawl, the low-density residential and strip mall development that characterizes so many places today.

While many people will readily cite loss of open space and farmland, traffic congestion, and water and air pollution as results of sprawl, these are not the only negative effects. At the same time that rural and outer suburban areas have faced many of the problems typically associated with too much growth, central city neighborhoods, older suburban areas, and small towns have suffered from not enough growth.

These areas have lost jobs, families, schools, and commerce. Housing stock has declined, and the tax base has withered as middle-income families have moved out to new communities. Many residents of these neighborhoods have been left with little access to jobs, education opportunities, or health care and other services.

Smart growth has the potential to address the inequitable consequences of uneven growth by promoting new development in communities that have lost out as a result of sprawl. Smart growth is not a single, blanket policy for land use; it encompasses a range of tools that can be adjusted to a particular community's needs. These options may include updating zoning codes to allow for a return to a traditional mix of land uses, increasing funding for public transportation to link central city workers to suburban jobs, and creating programs to increase affordable housing options throughout a region so that workers can live closer to employment centers.

Affordable housing is key

Smart growth is a way to look at the links between where we live and our quality of life. Until recently the smart growth movement focused primarily on the land-use and design aspects of housing, rather than on affordability and supply. This is partly because environmentalists were the ones concerned with land use and design issues who, by and large, initiated the smart growth movement.

Affordable housing and smart growth advocates have often spoken in languages that the other side has not understood, and because of this, the two sides have not necessarily seen that they have a common interest in promoting investment in and revitalization of existing communities. As interest in smart growth has increased, however, so have questions about how measures to direct growth back into older urban suburban neighborhoods may affect the cost of housing in those areas. Gentrification has become a major concern. An increasing number of

environmentalists and other smart growth advocates have become aware that affordable housing needs to be included as a central component of smart growth.

An NNC report examines what authors have said about the connections between growth management, smart growth policies, and affordable housing. The report does not find enough evidence to suggest that smart growth is bad for affordable housing. Rather, it is essential that communities plan for regionwide affordable housing as a central component of any smart growth program rather than thinking of the two as separate aspects of planning.

Without a regional approach, some jurisdictions will continue to shut out low-income workers and families through large-lot size requirements and other restrictions, while other areas struggle to revitalize existing affordable housing stock. Regional affordability is good for smart growth because it puts workers closer to job centers, reducing the distance traveled to work. Also, affordable housing tends to be smaller, more compact housing.

Encouraging initiatives

Some states and cities have established initiatives to encourage and promote affordable, smarter growth. For example:

- ◆ In Vermont in the late 1980s, real estate prices were rising, displacing low-income tenants and pressuring farmers to sell their land. The state created a Housing and Conservation Trust Fund with the dual goal of providing affordable housing assistance and preserving farms and open space.
- ◆ The Minnesota state legislature passed inclusionary zoning legislation, which provides incentives to builders willing to make 10 to 15 percent of units in new development affordable. In the Minneapolis-St. Paul region, the Metropolitan Council has used the legislation to provide assistance to projects where at least 15 percent of owner-occupied units are affordable at or below 60 percent of the area median income and a least 10 percent of rental units are affordable at or below 30 percent of area median income.
- ◆ Austin's SMART Housing program supports projects that are classified as Safe, Mixed-Income, Accessible, Reasonably Priced, and Transit-Oriented. Projects that provide affordable units can qualify for development-fee waivers and accelerated permit reviews.

Other communities are revising zoning codes to allow for more compact development and a mix of land uses. Still more are changing building codes to make it easier to renovate historic buildings. All these could increase the supply of affordable housing.

The alternative to smart growth — sprawl — has not delivered affordable housing effectively. Land use and zoning policies that promote sprawl also help exclude low-and moderate-income workers and families from new growth areas. For example, zoning regulations may require large-lot single-family homes while prohibiting smaller single-family homes, attached houses, and apartment buildings.

Where do we go from here?

Local housing and planning officials, as well as nonprofit housing providers, can advance the smart growth agenda in many ways. Key elements are regional affordability strategies and a holistic regional approach to growth that integrates affordable housing, job opportunities, transportation, schools, recreation, and open space. For example:

- ◆ **Local housing and planning officials** can promote the use of inclusionary zoning measures and fair share housing to encourage regional distribution of affordable housing. Inclusionary zoning programs can be either mandatory or voluntary. They typically involve incentives such as density bonuses or fee waivers for builders who include a certain percentage of affordable units in new developments (for example, 15 to 20 percent of new units affordable to incomes at or below 60 percent of area median income).
- ◆ **Local affordable housing developers** can look for partnerships with environmentalists, transportation advocates, and other smart growth supporters. Other constituencies such as employers, labor groups, faith-based organizations, and anti-poverty advocates also have a stake in seeing that regional growth policies include specific measures for affordable housing.
- ◆ **Local and national organizations** can advocate for a smart growth approach to HUD programs, making it a central component of HUD's affordable housing strategies and programs. Funding for affordable housing programs should be coordinated regionally along with programs to promote mixed-income housing, more compact development where

Regionalism and Race: Speaking Truth to Power

by Michael Hicks

Cultural or racial differences can undermine intergovernmental cooperation. The problem of racial distrust is one reason why regional governance strategies, particularly in the state of Michigan, may have limited success in the public marketplace. The reason that many working-class whites are loathe to form coalitions with more racially pronounced central cities may be this racial distrust – people often become more leery around poor African American or Latino people. Unfortunately, people may move away from or avoid hiring these people if they can. Zoning laws in the past have been crafted and enforced to keep “undesirables” from moving into communities.

The issue of race is, unfortunately, a significant one. J. Phillip Thompson, a professor of political science at Columbia University, finds flaws in the universal liberal perception of racial difference considered as a problem of resource distribution, a key feature of regional governance and consolidation. Thompson (1991) presents an alternative view that regards racial difference as a problem of group power relationships. Because matters of material distribution are decided by governmental legislative bodies – whether it is Congress, state legislatures or other elected groups – the adequacy of representation of African American interests in these institutions becomes a central question.

Thompson finds two major problems in traditional regional approaches. The first is that the state becomes an agent for the moral vision of only one part of society – middle-class whites. It implies that advocates for poor African Americans should concede certain demands, no matter how just, because white Americans will not accept them. Social policy will be built, it follows, not on shared principles of justice but on expediency. Expediency, absent political equality, is a justification for coercion. This approach suggests that only those principles and values acceptable to an unreflective and powerful white majority are viable, at least for now. It approximates forced racial assimilation – if outvoted by whites, African Americans are forced to comply (except, perhaps, where constitutionally protected rights are infringed) – albeit in the name of long-term benevolence for poor minorities. These strategies ignore the practical risk that, in the course of seeking material advantage for themselves, white middle-class leaders might use their moral prestige to do further damage to the poor.

The second major problem Thompson identifies is that these strategies for regional cooperation rely, by



default, on government bureaucracies and courts to implement programs intended to create cross-racial solidarity. Such strategies assume that government bureaucrats will not implement programs, perhaps under political pressure that may alienate racial minorities. Moreover, entrusting moral or physical integration to the large bureaucracies seriously threatens the viability of local democracy and social stability – especially with respect to poor African Americans, the targets of moral and physical integration.

An excessively empowered state can wreak havoc on the social networks and self-esteem of poor African Americans, as slum clearance and intrusive welfare agencies have amply demonstrated (Dreier 1999; Kleinberg 1995; Thomas 1997). Many argue that the state continues to play such a role. Thompson finds it difficult to imagine such “state-centered” strategies producing democratic outcomes; indeed, Thompson asserts that they are likely to further weaken local democracy and undermine personal autonomy for the very people they are supposed to help. The hope that local community groups can effectively monitor and pressure bureaucracies assumes a fairly robust civic infrastructure of poor African American communities. Thompson doubts the present capacity for such pressure.

Chronically poor communities are not going to be changed overnight. Regional strategies offer a considerable amount of potential, but they are also laden with practical blindspots, and are politically difficult to implement (Keating 1995; Thompson 1991; Sugrue 1996).

Racial diffusion, as a byproduct of regional strategies, can reduce crime, balance tax bases, and bring job-seekers closer to job-providers. Diffusion can do considerable violence, however, to the concept of intra-racial unity and production. The potential of losing this is a concern to many African Americans. As a historically oppressed racial group where significant percentages of people still live in socially and economically distressed communities, a sense of unity and internal production (no matter how elusive) is very important to many African Americans. Any perceived challenge to this ideal is regarded with considerable misgiving. Distrustful communities of color have a level of skepticism when it comes to outsiders, and there are great concerns about the immediate loss of resources and political power. It is harder to close ranks around a diffuse community (It must be acknowledged, however, that racial/ethnic “gatekeepers” may have a certain stake in the current

Collaboration and Neighborhood Effects of Urban Sprawl

Tom Bulten



Tom Bulten

Urban neighborhoods are battered by the broad economic and social forces of a region and nation. The processes of urban sprawl, rooted in both individual choices and government policies, drain urban neighborhoods of human and financial resources. These urban neighborhoods are searching for comprehensive tools and methods to address the complex issues they face and to rebuild their depleted physical, economic, and social infrastructures. The revaluing and revitalization of these neighborhoods is a key aim of efforts to slow urban sprawl and promote sustainable development. The development of collaborations among organizations interested in the health of the neighborhood and the region is one approach to assist distressed neighborhoods that are responding to the effects of urban sprawl.

This article describes an attempt by three organizations to improve the quality of life in a distressed Grand Rapids, Michigan, neighborhood between 1999 and 2001. This collaboration was part of the United Growth For Kent County project, which seeks to slow urban sprawl by building a rural and urban coalition opposed to sprawling land use patterns. The urban component of the project educates and mobilizes the residents of urban neighborhoods experiencing the negative effects of sprawl.

The Project

The Michigan State University Center for Urban Affairs (CUA) has been active in Grand Rapids for over 12 years. A primary mission of the CUA is to build the capacity of urban neighborhood associations to better confront the problems and capitalize on the opportunities of the neighborhood. The Garfield Park Neighborhoods Association (GPNA) is one of the most well respected neighborhood associations in Grand Rapids. GPNA serves a diverse set of neighborhoods that surround Garfield Park on the south side of Grand Rapids. Dickinson Elementary School anchors one of the lower-income neighborhoods in the Garfield Park area. The school is characterized by many indicators of high achievement, yet the school's reputation has been diminished by other factors, including drug sales that occur at nearby street intersections.

These three partners collaborated to improve public perception of the school and its surrounding neighborhood. This goal was based on the theory that an elementary school can be a valuable asset for a neighborhood, and that poorly perceived schools fuel urban sprawl by driving neighborhood residents out of the city while at the same time discouraging new households from moving into the city.

Early in the process, the stakeholders acknowledged that the reputation of their neighborhood, like those of many urban neighborhoods, was marred by the perception of poor public education opportunities, high crime and deteriorated housing. The project targeted the northern part of the Garfield Park neighborhood, surrounding Dickinson Elementary School, for its goal of "increasing the stability of...[the] area by increasing the stability of Dickinson School." Initially, the project leaders determined their objectives to be:

- ◆ an increase in student enrollment;
- ◆ an increase in parent (and other resident) participation in the school; and
- ◆ a decrease in student transiency at the school.

The strategies that were selected to accomplish these objectives included: the promotion of homeownership in the neighborhood; marketing of the strengths of the school; and addressing the drug activity in the area.

Project Activities

The project included three sets of activities. The first involved an effort to understand and improve the neighborhood perception of Dickinson. This included a survey of neighborhood residents regarding homeownership and the school, conducted by business students from Calvin College. In addition, a brochure highlighting positive aspects of the neighborhood and school was developed and distributed. Finally, an MSU student inventoried 167 of the properties in the Dickinson area, documenting their ownership, condition, and value. This inventory will be useful as a benchmark for comparing change over time.

The second element of the project focused on a set of commercial buildings two blocks west of Dickinson Elementary School. The stakeholders suspected that one cause of the recurrent drug activity in the neighborhood was the presence and deteriorating condition of these structures. A group of MSU urban and regional planning students studied the history and status of these buildings. Among their ideas for revitalizing the block was the recommendation that the City of Grand Rapids acquire ownership of the buildings and resell them to a nonprofit organization for redevelopment. However, obtaining funding for such an effort would be difficult, and surveys revealed that resident desire for change in the buildings may not be as strong as anticipated. Healthy neighborhood support for any new uses for the buildings on the block will be essential.

Although barriers to redevelopment exist, the study of the block did initiate a neighborhood discussion about the impact of specific properties on neighborhood quality of

life. The effort by the MSU students was also instrumental in prompting GPNA to commit half the time of an Americorps member to continue addressing the issues of that part of the neighborhood.

Finally, a project grant enabled GPNA to extend the collaborative model and develop a new coalition to address the needs of the Hispanic part of the neighborhood. In 2000, GPNA received a grant through the United Growth for Kent County's Mini-Grant Program to develop a coalition of organizations, called Southwest Partners, that would address the needs of the neighborhood's largely Hispanic west side. GPNA's Spanish-speaking crime prevention organizer coordinates this collaborative effort, modeled after the MSU-GPNA-Dickinson coalition. Southwest Partners has about 25 members, 15 of which attend regular monthly meetings. The coalition identified housing as a priority issue for this part of the neighborhood. Particularly important is the need for mediation and advocacy on behalf of non-English-speaking residents with housing related concerns. The unique health needs of this population may be addressed by Southwest Partners in the future.

A crime sweep in late 1999, although not an integral part of the United Growth project, was also important in the life of the neighborhood during this period.

Outcomes

An improvement in the appearance of the neighborhood may have been achieved in recent years due to increased lighting and decreased drug activity. While not a direct initiative of the United Growth project, neighborhood improvements are necessary if neighborhoods are to be revalued. The results on crime abatement are mixed. Both a neighborhood resident and the crime prevention organizer report a return of criminal activity to the neighborhood after the crime sweep.

For a relatively small-scale, short-term project such as this one, changes in urban sprawl or even in specific project objectives are extremely difficult to measure. A reduction in the rate of migration out of urban neighborhoods toward the suburbs may take years or decades to observe. Similarly, renewed valuing of and investment in urban neighborhoods occurs slowly. Still, the project generated several positive results that may not have been anticipated or captured by explicit objectives:

1. The collaboration was viewed positively by all three primary stakeholders. Especially positive is a relationship of trust and mutual respect that has developed between GPNA and Dickinson as a result, in part, of the United Growth project.
2. The capacity of GPNA improved as a result of the collaboration. GPNA now has a greater capability to generate invoices, leverage additional resources with its current funding sources, and target designated funds to specific projects in order to free general funding for other activities or operational expenses. In addition, participation in this project introduced the

staff of GPNA to a variety of useful individuals and other resources in Grand Rapids. The credibility of GPNA was enhanced by its affiliation with a major research university. The relationship that was developed between GPNA and Dickinson school could produce lasting benefits for both the neighborhood and the school.

3. Operation RECESS, the huge drug control effort in late 1999, had a positive, albeit temporary, effect on the neighborhood. Crime sweeps such as Operation RECESS typically have only short-term results. The return of crime activity since that time highlights the need for ongoing efforts to keep streets free of drug-related crime for the safety of neighborhood residents. In addition, neighborhoods sensitive to the need for broad regional development and equity must be cautious about merely displacing urban problems to other, less capable or organized, neighborhoods. The initial success of the operation instilled a sense of confidence that, while not measurable, is likely a valuable resource for the neighborhood, its association, its crime prevention committee, and organizers.

Conclusion

The collaboration in the Garfield Park neighborhood of Grand Rapids could be improved by emphasizing the value of the racial and economic diversity in the neighborhood. Collaborative efforts should engage more individuals at all levels of the participating institutions. Neighborhood schools should become holistic community schools, collaborating to provide a variety of learning opportunities for adults as well as children. In this way, the schools can fulfill their role as anchors of the neighborhoods in which they are located. Finally, collaborative partners should increasingly be willing to advocate on behalf of other partners and for policy changes that can make land use patterns more equitable, just and sustainable.

Urban sprawl is a multi-faceted social and spatial phenomenon. To slow urban sprawl will require a dramatically new way of thinking at many levels of society. This paradigm or systems shift will incorporate new values, practices and procedures that acknowledge the far-reaching and long-term impact of land use decisions.

The partners of the United Growth collaborative effort in the Garfield Park neighborhood may have begun thinking about their interests and issues in terms of broader metropolitan and regional development. This type of regional outlook is necessary for both urban and rural places to be appropriately valued for their unique contributions to the entire region. Vigorous action will be required if urban sprawl land use patterns are to be slowed, stopped, or reversed. Collaborative efforts by diverse but united partners are a valuable strategy for improving land use decisions and the quality of places.

Tom Bulten received his M.A. degree in Geography and Urban Studies from Michigan State University.

appropriate, a mix of land uses, and transportation systems that link low- and moderate-income families and workers to good jobs, schools, services, and recreation.

- ◆ **Affordable housing advocates** can participate in smart growth coalitions in their region and state to promote affordability as a central part of growth concerns. They can educate other smart growth advocates, local officials, and citizens about options such as inclusionary zoning, community land trusts, and changes in subdivision codes.
- ◆ **Community development practitioners** can embrace smart growth as a way to expand the traditional boundaries of housing-focused work by encompassing a broader range of community issues like transportation, access to jobs, schools, and environmental justice.

Reinvigorating communities

Smart growth has great potential for bringing new investment to older urban, suburban, and rural communities. Transit-oriented development, reuse of buildings, and a mix of land uses can all complement housing-focused community development programs. However, there is a danger of gentrification and displacement of lower-income residents if adequate measures are not in place to preserve existing affordable housing and to expand housing options throughout a region.

Growth issues are mostly local issues, and the connection is not necessarily made at that level. According to the Trust for Public Land, in 2001 there were 190 ballot initiatives across the country to preserve open space. To achieve smart growth goals, however, it is important to pay equal attention to reinvestment and revitalization of older neighborhoods and preservation and expansion of affordable housing options. Housing and community development professionals can participate in local growth discussions to make sure that affordable housing is at the core of any smart growth strategy. There is great opportunity to build a large constituency for affordable housing within the context of smart growth and healthy regions.

Leah Kalinosky is coordinator for the National Neighborhood Coalition's Neighborhoods, Regions, and Smart Growth Project and co-author of the report "Smart Growth, Better Neighborhoods: Communities Leading the Way." She has a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and previously worked for Common Wealth Development, a CDC in Madison.

state of affairs.). These communities, primarily African American ones, often resist giving away localized community power, limited as it may be, for a nebulous promise of improved schools and neighborhoods (Louisville Courier-Journal, 4 July 1999).

The wants and concerns of communities of color cannot be easily discounted. These desires must be understood to weave strategies and policy to form successful regional partnerships and create healthy, economically viable communities across regions.

Informed proponents of regionalism such as Orfield (1997) insist upon seeking out a region's religious community. The political will and power of affluent communities can provide a determined opposition. Churches and other faith-based organizations introduce an essential moral dimension to this discussion. These organizations can challenge individuals on the morality of dividing a region into two communities: how can one be comfortable being prosperous, enjoying the benefits of citizenship, while the other bears the burdens of such and is impoverished? Churches hold the potential for broadening the reach of intergovernmental cooperation through a resonance for its messages in distrustful blue-collar communities, and a sense of understanding and fair play in more affluent ones.

The challenge of making regionalism viable as a policy strategy demands that matters of race are fully considered and factored in the decision-making process. It is vital that the concerns of the loss of African American political influence and power are considered in any regional plan. No group of people, especially a historically oppressed and economically challenged one, wants to give up political power and influence. At the same time, it is essential that people across multiple communities and groups understand that regional strategies are not a zero sum game of power and resources, but seeks to make economically weak communities strong as well as increase the resources for all.

Michael Hicks received his B.S. degree in Pan-African Studies, with a minor in political science, and his M.A. from the University of Louisville.

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Twelve People Can Make A Difference

Bette Downs

Twelve people can make a difference. Following the 1999 basketball riots that shocked the people of East Lansing, the City and Michigan State University formed the Community Relations Coalition. Headed by volunteer Nancy Schertzing, the Coalition promotes “town and gown” harmony.

Today, one of the organization’s major initiatives, the Neighborhood Resource Coordinator program, brings together 12 people, six permanent residents and six MSU students, who work with individuals and groups to establish communication and understanding among the diverse segments of East Lansing. Block parties, meetings, clean-up sessions, and other events serve as catalysts.

Each of the six MSU student coordinators partners with one of the permanent East Lansing residents to address mutual concerns. Each student/partner team covers a section of the City’s Oakwood and Bailey areas.

Last February, new bonds developed through the neighborhood forums organized by the Community Relations Coalition. On February 7, neighborhood resource coordinator Sara Beth Posius, an MSU senior, and her roommates hosted one of nine forums at their neat, comfortable home, a dramatic departure from the “Animal House” image of student housekeeping.

Eight students and community leaders attended the session, chaired by Schertzing. For two and half-hours they analyzed neighborhood problems and relationships.

Neighborhood resource partner Geoffrey Habron reflected on his hope for student/non-student accord. “I see awareness as a key,” he said. “We need to recognize that values vary. We have two cultures living together, students and long term residents. The more we learn about each other’s culture, the more we can reduce conflict.”

In Habron’s view, the way to improve student/non-student relationships lies in direct contact. “If I have a problem, maybe a noise problem, I want to resolve it by discussing it with my neighbor. I don’t want to call the police.”

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Permanent Resident Partner Geoffrey Habron and Neighborhood Resource Coordinator Sara Beth Posius at a Neighborhood Forum sponsored by the Community Relations Coalition

Judith Merchant, permanent resident partner and co-president of Oakwood Historic Neighborhood Association, has high praise for her student coordinator, Ashley LaCroix.

LaCroix has produced striking fliers for the student/partner program. One flier, an invitation to Oakwood’s neighborhood forum, states, “This is a time for permanent residents and students to sit down and discuss the living in East Lansing.” Eight neighbors attended. Another flier, illustrated, produced on blue paper, and entitled “Friendly Faces of Oakwood Neighborhood” introduces LaCroix as “your student neighborhood resource coordinator.” She refers to the diversity of residents as “one of the attractions to living in Oakwood [where] people of all ages including early retirees, MSU students, elders, couples, singles, and families call this neighborhood home.”

Comments from the nine forums were reviewed at a citywide assembly in April. These preparations will determine a five-year agenda for the Coalition.

For the six student coordinators, the partnership program offers an opportunity to sharpen their “people skills” through practical application of their related course work in a three-credit seminar in community development offered by the MSU Urban and Regional Planning Program and led by Dr. Rex LaMore, state director, and John Melcher, associate

Downs, continued on next page



Neighborhood Resource Coordinators Leslie Zack and Stacey Smith at seminar in community development

state director, of MSU's Center for Urban Affairs Community and Economic Development Program.

Class work focuses on practical information. Recent class discussion included a review of the program planning process with emphasis on basic steps: assignment of tasks, determination of expectations, follow-up, and recognition of accomplishments. As a class assignment, students were asked to prepare a handbook with community organization tips for use by future coordinators.

Student coordinator Stacey Smith, a junior majoring in marketing, finds her community contacts valuable. "It's satisfying to see our efforts helpful to the neighborhood," she says. "Also, I think the techniques we use in community organization apply to marketing and other fields."

For the six permanent resident partners, the program offers an opportunity for association with the student population. Student coordinators and permanent resident partners agree that neighborhood relationships have improved.

Daniel Kittle, an MSU graduate student in Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education and a community relations' associate, supervises the program. He points to its unique quality. Other universities promote student-permanent resident exchange but administrators and city officials assume responsibility. In East Lansing, extensive grass roots participation makes MSU different.

For each student, the program provides a \$2500 annual stipend with funds contributed equally by the University and the City of East Lansing. Students are committed to ten hours a week neighborhood activity but often work beyond this requirement.

In reviewing the program, Kittle says, "We hope that our success so far will lead to expansion from our modest beginning in 1999 to include more and more East Lansing neighborhoods. The more we are able to encourage and empower students and permanent residents to communicate and cooperate the more successful we will be at supporting a sense of community within East Lansing neighborhoods."

Judith Merchant concurs and would especially like to see expansion in areas close to the MSU campus where large numbers of students live. Merchant points out that the neighborhood she represents lies adjacent to downtown. The traffic this generates presents a challenge and expansion of the NRC program could alleviate some of the resulting pressures.

The eighteenth century planner, Patrick Geddes, made a plea for mixed communities combining infinite variations among people of different ideas and habits. Expansion of the Neighborhood Resource Coordinator program could further Geddes' ideal of diversity and harmony. Twelve people reaching out to other people can help bring tranquility to a diverse community. Twelve people can make a difference.

Bette Downs is a regular contributor to Community News and Views. She lives in East Lansing.

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Nominations Sought for Community Economic Development Award

The Michigan State University Center for Urban Affairs is seeking nominations for the 2002 Community and Economic Development Award, presented each year by the Michigan Partnership for Economic Development Assistance. Interested applicants are encouraged to submit a nomination for consideration.

Since 1996, the Michigan Partnership for Economic Development Assistance (MP/EDA) has presented this award for notable achievement in community and economic development. The purpose of the award is to recognize excellence in scholarship and action in community and economic development in Michigan. Eligible applicants include practitioners in community settings at any level, as well as students, faculty and research staffs of Michigan colleges, universities, and research institutes.

Applicants are invited to submit entries in one of the following two categories. The first is **academic scholarship**, dealing with research related to distressed communities, which contributes to a new understanding of theory or practice in a given field of

community or economic development. The second category is **best practice**, designed to recognize practitioners who are doing innovative and effective community development work in distressed areas. Self-nomination is permitted.

To be considered for the award, an applicant may complete the nomination form (see below) and return it to the MSU Center for Urban Affairs, along with supporting documents that describe and document the quality of the nominated work. Such support might consist of research findings (please include brief abstract), program descriptions, promotional brochures, press coverage, or similar material sufficient to serve as a basis for evaluating the activity on its merits. The deadline for nominations is June 14, 2002.

Nominations received after the deadline will be considered for the 2003 award.

The MSU Community and Economic Development Program's Faculty Board of Advisors will review the nominations and will confer the Award at the 2002 Summer Institute conference, July 11 in East Lansing.

2002 Community Economic Development Award Nomination Form

Category of Nomination (check one) Academic Scholarship Best Practice

Name(s) of Nominees: _____

Name of Organization or Project: _____

Nominee Contact Information: _____

Brief description of Nominated Work: _____

This Nomination Form may be copied and faxed to (517) 484-0068.

Or mail to MP/EDA, 1801 W. Main St., Lansing, MI 48915.

Supporting documents may be faxed, mailed, or emailed (as attachments, to: lamore@msu.edu).

Call (517) 353-9555 for further information.

Deadline for 2002 Award: June 14, 2002

CEDP

Phi Kappa Phi Recognizes Housing Research Team

The Michigan State University Chapter of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society recently presented its 2002 Excellence Award for Interdisciplinary Scholarship to Affordable Housing Research Team, led by the MSU Center for Urban Affairs. The following remarks are adapted from remarks made by Treasurer Barbara O'Kelly at the Chapter's annual banquet and new member induction ceremony on April 22.

“The availability of safe and affordable housing is a significant problem in Michigan, especially for low-income and minority families. For example, about 80 percent of extremely low-income families have some kind of housing problems, as do over half of minority households.

“Nonprofit housing providers such as Habitat for Humanity have increasingly taken on the responsibility for addressing the need for decent affordable housing. However, many of these groups face significant challenges. First, they must build fiscally sound organizations that can effectively use staff and volunteer resources. At the same time, they must also develop the capacity to plan, finance, and construct quality housing.

“In response to this interdisciplinary problem, in 1998 the Community and Economic Development Program of MSU's Center for Urban Affairs, the Building Construction Management Program in Agricultural Engineering, and the Urban and Regional Planning Program joined the Michigan Chapter of Habitat for Humanity and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation to establish a cross-disciplinary scholarly team. Their purpose was to determine existing practices in Michigan and to recommend methods to increase organizational capacity and production.

“Academic disciplines represented on the team include civil and architectural engineering, urban and regional planning, social work, business administration, education, community development,

and international development finance. Some accomplishments of the team include:

- ◆ Developing and applying assessment tools to measure organizational capacity and housing production efficiency.
- ◆ Assessing the revised housing rehabilitation code from the perspective of preserving Michigan's aging housing.
- ◆ Preliminary development of a professional certificate program in affordable housing management and production for non-profit housing personnel in Michigan.
- ◆ Publishing, in the Fannie Mae Foundation's *Housing Facts & Findings* newsletter, guidelines for streamlining building codes to encourage revitalization.
- ◆ Providing policy briefs on rehabilitation codes.

“Members of the team believe that a long-term, comprehensive strategy that empowers community-based organizations to become effective leaders in developing and implementing successful housing and community development projects is essential to ensuring the Michigan families will have access to safe, decent, and affordable housing. They have demonstrated that University-based interdisciplinary teams can make important contributions towards putting such a strategy into operation. The Michigan State University Chapter of Phi Kappa Phi is proud to recognize your achievements with our 2002 Excellence Award in Interdisciplinary Scholarship.”

Phi Kappa Phi is an international academic honor society dedicated to the recognition and promotion of academic excellence in all fields of higher education. Phi Kappa Phi was founded in 1897 at the University of Maine. More than one million scholars have been inducted into Phi Kappa Phi, and over 120,000 members maintain their active status in the society's 282 local chapters.

UPDATES

Fifteenth Annual Summer Institute Announced

The Michigan Partnership for Economic Development Assistance has announced its Fifteenth Annual Summer Institute, to be held in East Lansing on **Thursday, July 11, 2002**. The one-day conference, “**Reshaping the Fundamentals: Strengthening Community Economies in Turbulent Times**,” will address issues of community and economic development in the rapidly changing and unpredictable context of the contemporary global economy. Participants will engage in workshop sessions on the roles that the issues of **People, Place, Financial Resources**, and **Planning** play in community development in the current environment. Panelists will discuss a variety of topics including education policy, workforce development, innovative tools for community-based planning, the linkages between social and financial capital, and the impacts of the State’s demographic and economic trends.

Peter Edelman, a Professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center, will open the conference with a presentation addressing the adverse outcomes experienced by many families and children in today’s economy. Edelman served in the Clinton Administration as Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation of Health and Human Services, and is the author of many articles on poverty, constitutional law, and issues about children and youth. Edelman currently directs a clinic focusing on poverty policy in the District of Columbia.

During the luncheon, **Laury Hammel**, owner and president of The Longfellow Clubs of Wayland, Massachusetts, will discuss sustainable business practices. In 1988 Hammel formed the New England Business Association for Social Responsibility, the first trade association of socially responsible businesses, and later led the founding of a similar national organization. He has recently been instrumental in founding a new organization – the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies – an alliance of 17 local networks of business leaders throughout North America who are committed to building a just and environmentally sustainable economy by supporting local and independent businesses that enliven communities.

The Summer Institute series is intended to address cutting-edge issues of community and economic development as they relate to the fortunes of distressed communities. Each summer since 1988 the MP/EDA, with support from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration, has brought together community leaders, planners, educators, activists, students and scholars to consider key issues in community development. Previous conferences have focused on topics such as the digital divide, sustainable communities, and faith-based development.

For additional information about the 2002 Summer Institute, call the MSU Center for Urban Affairs at (517) 353-9555.

CEDP Directory

Statewide and Lansing CEDP	(517) 353-9555
<i>1801 West Main St., Lansing, MI 48915</i>	
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John Melcher, Associate State Director and Lansing Director	
Judy Gardi, Lansing Network Center Coordinator	(517) 887-4556
Detroit CEDP	(313) 833-4869
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Lillian Randolph, Director	
Flint CEDP	(810) 244-8519
<i>G-4215 W. Pasadena Ave., Flint, MI 48504-2376</i>	
Linda Patrick, Director	
Grand Rapids CEDP	(616) 458-6805
<i>Commerce Building, 5 Lyon, N.W., Suite 110, Grand Rapids, MI 49503</i>	
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Pontiac CEDP	(248) 858-0895
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